

## **Appendix D – Cognitive Interview Informed Consent**

### **Informed Consent for VR&E Longitudinal Study Survey Cognitive Interviews**

#### **Who is paying for the survey?**

The Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act requires the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) to collect information from Veterans who have participated in the Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E) program and to monitor the effectiveness of the program.

VA has asked Westat, a national research company, to help collect this information by doing the Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E) Longitudinal Study Survey. VA wants to make sure the questions we ask are clear and easy to understand, so Westat is talking to Veterans who have participated in the VR&E program to get their comments and thoughts on the survey questions.

#### **What is the interview about?**

The interview will ask people to read all of the questions we plan to ask in the VR&E Longitudinal Study Survey and let us know if the questions are easy to understand. The information you provide will help us improve how we ask the questions.

#### **What do you want me to do?**

We are asking for your consent to do an interview that will take 1 hour or less, so you can share your thoughts about the questions. We will ask you about your recent employment and education experiences, visits to medical facilities, and participation in the VR&E program. We will also ask if you have any suggestions on making the questions easier to understand. You can skip any questions that you do not want to answer or stop answering at any time.

If you agree to do the interview, we will schedule the interview at a time that works for you sometime between [TIME FRAME]. We will use Microsoft Teams, a tool that helps us see and hear each other, to do the interview by video conference.

We will ask you to agree to let us record the interview. This will help us correctly note what you tell us. We will later listen to the recording to improve how we ask the questions. If you do the interview by video conference, you may turn off your camera at any point and you can ask the interviewer to stop the recording at any point. We will destroy the recording once we have changed the questions based on suggestions for improvement.

#### **How was I selected for this interview?**

Your name was picked at random from a list of people who completed the annual VR&E survey between December 1, 2022 and February 23, 2023.

## **Do I have to participate?**

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If you decide **not** to participate, **it will not affect your participation in the VR&E program, the services you receive from the VR&E program, or any current or future benefits you may apply for.**

## **How will you protect my privacy?**

We will follow Federal law and regulations to protect your privacy. The information that you supply is protected by law (the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 522a, and section 5701 of Title 38 of the United States Code). Providing this information is voluntary; not providing all or part of the information will not impact any current or future benefits you may apply for.

We will use your answers and comments to improve the survey questions. None of your personal information will ever be printed in any reports or presentations. We will sum up your comments together with comments from other participants and put them into a memo to VA. The memo will also provide suggestions for ways to improve the questions based on your comments.

## **What are the benefits?**

You will not benefit directly from helping us. Your suggestions may improve the questions we plan to include in the VR&E Longitudinal Study Survey. VA will use the VR&E Longitudinal Study Survey to assess and continually improve the services provided by the VR&E program.

## **Will I receive any money for completing the interview?**

After completing the interview, we will email you a **\$50 electronic Amazon gift card.**

## **What are the risks?**

There is a small risk that your personal information could be released. To reduce this risk, we will destroy the recording as soon as we finish making changes to the survey. When we report findings to VA, we will not use your name or any words that can tell others who you are.

## **Who do I contact with questions?**

For questions about the survey or the interview, call Westat at 1-855-731-0398 toll free.

For questions about your rights and welfare as a research participant, call the Westat Human Subjects Protections office at 1-888-920-7631, and leave a message **only** with your first name, the name of the

survey (VR&E Longitudinal Study Survey) and a phone number beginning with the area code. Someone will return your call as soon as possible.